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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a literary review and research-based techniques for teaching reading. The paper also examines the different philosophies of reading to ascertain beneficial commonalities. Based on the literature review, a manual was produced to support administrators, teachers, and parents in securing quality reading instruction. Appendix A contains teacher and administrative conversations at Wilshire Elementary; Appendix B contains the manual. (Contains 48 references.) (NKA)

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SUCCESSFUL READING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE TEXAS READING INITIATIVE COMPONENTS: A LITERARY REVIEW AND MANUAL FOR ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Children encounter a multitude of challenges everyday, but one of the most crucial obstacles is conquering print and becoming lifelong readers. To function effectively in today's society, children must unlock the mysteries of reading. It is an alarming fact that in the United States there are 40 million illiterate Americans (Ponnuru, 1999).

Becoming a reader opens every imaginable door, while children who fail to achieve fluency face difficult paths with limited choices, multiple struggles in the schoolhouse, and throughout their lives (Carbo, 1995; Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Rafferty (1999) highlights 38 different types of literacy evident in today's society which fall into groupings of traditional, representational, and tool literacy. With this explosion, children must be taught in the most effective way, so they are prepared for these increasing demands (Adams, 1990; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Rafferty, 1999).

The critical time for learning language is early in the child's education (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkenson, 1985; Honig, 1996; Siegel & Hanson, 1992). Siegel and Hanson (1992) found long-term reading competency levels were higher when students were provided with more direct and indirect

educational experiences early in their school experience. These results were consistent throughout different ethnic, gender and social groups. Additional studies highlighted the need to focus on reading, language, and educational experiences at the earliest possible opportunities (Adams, 1990; Slavin, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Adams (1990) discussed how school personnel have the first few years of schooling to increase and maintain a low-achieving student's performance, but regrettably, after this small window of opportunity, if the student is not able to read on-level, he or she is never likely to close the educational gap.

Unfortunately, in 1992, National Assessment of Educational Progress and their researchers found several alarming trends. Students were actually reading very little in or out of school. Their report indicated classroom focus remained on low-level reading such as workbooks. Students had "difficulty in constructing thoughtful responses" and about 20% of American students reported reading for fun only yearly or never (Carbo & Cole, 1995).

To counteract this alarming trend, teachers must focus on research-based techniques from the earliest educational opportunity to teach today's students successfully. These techniques must be implemented in an effective, as well as

efficient, manner. As Adams (1990) said, "If we want to induce children to read...we must teach them to read well" (p. 5).

Teaching children to read and comprehend in effective ways has dominated the educational world, like the endless swing of the pendulum (Carbo, 1995). Teachers struggle to maximize their instructional blocks and ingrain as much as possible within limited time frames in classrooms. When Allington (1995) studied the time factor, students read for a very limited time during language arts periods. They spent a disproportionate amount of time on low-level skill and drill activities. According to this research, these activities did not increase reading ability as effectively as actual reading. Evaluation of other instructional time at an elementary school illuminated the importance of uninterrupted language arts blocks (Wheaton & Kay, 1999). Each child received only 30 minutes of direct individual literacy instruction per week. This time was precious considering that currently, 40% of fourth graders nationwide were not reading on grade level (Wheaton & Kay, 1999).

Determining the effectiveness of various methods, approaches, and beliefs can be daunting. Coupled with this struggle is the escalating level of literacy needed to cope with societal and technologic demands (Rafferty, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The focus must remain on finding and implementing the

highest quality of reading programs possible to prepare students for the ever-expanding future.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper was to provide a literary review and research-based techniques for teaching reading. There was also an examination of the different philosophies of reading to ascertain beneficial commonalties. After reviewing this literature, a manual was produced to support administrators, teachers, and parents in securing quality reading instruction.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Traditionally, schools symbolized America's commitment to providing every child an equal opportunity to grow and achieve, but current trends highlight a harsh reality instead. Poverty rates in the Unites States have risen from 16% in the 1970s to 25% (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Poverty is a quintessential component in an individual's quality of life. United States' schools are losing the battle against social equality.

With the elevation in poverty rates, educational systems and related statistics further illuminate this social imbalance with 71% of Anglo fourth graders scoring at or above the basic level in reading, compared to 31% of African-Americans and 36% of Latinos (Slavin, 1998). To combat this situation, schools must begin early with quality programs, focus on strengths within the cultures and individuals, and attempt to prevent future obstacles (Siegal & Hanson, 1992; Slavin, 1998). Society must also recognize educating students at-risk will cost approximately 50% more than children who are successful without additional aid (Allington & Walmsley, 1995).

EARLY INSTRUCTION

With these disheartening statistics weighing on us, society must focus on how to combat them. Children begin learning from the moment they are born (Founas & Pinnell, 1996). The glaring reality is early intervention and education are going to impact children and their learning in a profound manner (Adams, Foorman, Lungberg, & Beeler, 1998; Cunningham & Allington, 1998; Honig, 1996; National Academy of Education, 1984; Siegel & Hanson, 1992). The deceptively simple task of identifying the phonemes prior to kindergarten has

been shown to have a predictive power of as much as 50% on the students' reading ability at the conclusion of first grade (Adams et al., 1998). Another startling fact remains only one in eight children at the conclusion of first grade who read below grade level will ever rejoin their classmates reading on-level (Honig, 1997). Honig (1997) also reports first grade comprehension levels predict second and third grade levels at a rate of 80% to 90%, and continue to reflect nearly 40% of reading comprehension levels at a ninth grade level. Understandably, educators feel enormous pressure to propel students quickly and effectively, within reason, from the first step through the schoolhouse doors.

These first years of education set the course for children (Adams et al., 1998; Anderson et al., 1985; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Resources and expertise must be maximized to utilize these vital moments of learning. School goals must involve students reading primers by mid-first grade (Honig, 1996) and cultivating a lifelong love for reading. To achieve this reading goal, teachers must use appropriate and effective instructional methods to ensure success.

APPROACHES TO READING INSTRUCTION

Teachers harbor no illusions of a universal method meeting students' needs, and embrace the reality of utilizing various techniques to reach students (Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Honig, 1996; International Reading Association, 2000; Strickland, 1998). The whole language versus phonics debate is pointless and counter-productive. Children need aspects of both ideologies (Bower, 1993; Bracy, 1998; Carbo, 1995; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Freppon & Dahl, 1998; Harrison, 1999; Honig, 1996; Routman, 2000; Smith, 1992; Strickland, 1998). Honig (1996) portrayed this methodological debate as a "destructive controversy" (p. 2). Bower (1993) supported the American Psychological Association's suggestion to avoid relying exclusively on any one method of instruction.

Bower (1993) detailed a study showing classrooms using a variety of strategies were more successful in furthering reading skills. This finding was especially true of students who initially were considered poor readers. Bracey (1998) also shared Bower's viewpoint on using a combination of approaches to reach all students. Cunningham and Allington (1999) asked, "How can we organize our classrooms so that we 'have it all' " (p. 14)? The International

Reading Association (2000) outlined, in their position statement, the belief that "children have a right to appropriate early reading instruction based on their individual needs" (p. 1). They included their support of eclectic methods and approaches being incorporated into classrooms to ensure that all students ascertain the necessary literacy skills.

Freppon and Dahl (1998) echoed the cry for a balanced approach to instruction, but also emphasized "complex situations need more time, support, and understanding than ever before" (p. 248). Another approach, which utilized aspects of both ideologies, was the whole-part-whole method. This method begins with a whole text, followed by a lesson focused on a specific skill using the text, and then returning to the whole text for practice. Strickland (1998) believed this procedure incorporated whole language and phonics into a meaningful and effective strategy. Strickland felt the initial debate was centered on the quantity needed of each approach, not the quality and merits; therefore, she prescribed a combination of approaches to be used to connect with each individual student.

Strickland's (1998) beliefs were validated by Carbo's research, which stressed student's different learning styles. Carbo (1995) determined children with strong auditory and analytic reading styles responded to a phonetic

approach; conversely, children who were visual, tactile, or global learners blossomed under a whole language methodology. Walther (1998) and Larsen (1997) also found the blended approach to teaching reading highly beneficial to students. This blended approach consisted of different components such as initiating the lesson by reading a book or a portion of it, then focusing on specific words or phases and using these phases to initiate a skills-based, mini-lesson and discussions. This type of instruction met the needs of a variety of learners by incorporating different instructional approaches into one cohesive presentation.

With an educated consensus on the validity of blending phonics or skills-based method with whole-language or context-based method, a program must include vital aspects of each ideology. Honig (1996) supported the belief classroom instruction should begin with skills-training, because successful readers use this technique, and it was the most effective. This strategy could have involved working with words, manipulating sounds, and understanding how words are put together, as Cunningham and Allington (1999) described in their outline of a day in a quality classroom. It was important this type of instruction avoid the pitfalls of "skill and drill" worksheets, and meaningless activities that have no real world application. The instructional components, worked in

conjunction with literature, could be entertaining as well as educational to all learners.

Cunningham and Allington (1999) supported the concept of four blocks of time devoted to guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words. These diverse teaching strategies, coordinated into a fluid delivery, helped all students succeed. A balanced approach also incorporated extensive interaction with literature through teacher modeling, free exploration, and paired or group discussions. By utilizing diversified approaches, young minds were captivated by books which springboarded into an exploration of the English language through listening, reading, and writing (Strickland, 1998).

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

To begin this exploration of the English language, children must first recognize and be able to name the various letters of the alphabet. Adams (1990) discovered this type of recognition was a strong predictor of first grade reading skills. Phonemic awareness is the natural stepping stone after identification of the letters. Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte's (1994) longitudinal study indicated "phonological awareness was the phonological

variable most strongly related to subsequent reading skills" (p. 284). Bus and van IJzendoorn's (1999) meta-analysis substantiated this finding demonstrating "phonological awareness as a causal factor in learning to read" (p. 411). The simple act of exposing students to books facilitated phonemic awareness, an essential element in the mastery of reading (Adams et al., 1998; Bryant, Bradley, Maclean, & Crossland, 1989; Cunningham, 1995; Guszak, 1992). The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (2000) supported the use of phonemic awareness activities, in conjunction with letter-sound instruction, as having a positive effect on primary grade reading achievement.

Routman (2000) questioned if phonemic awareness proceeds learning to read or if they occur together, but she supported phonemic awareness as a necessary initial step on the road to reading success. The distinguishing of specific sounds within individual words was also a critical component in future reading achievement. There were a variety of methods teachers utilized to incorporate phonemic awareness and development into their lessons. Some ideas included listening games, awareness of syllables through clapping, initial and final sound activities, and letter and spelling centers (Adams et al., 1998). An additional method of facilitating phonemic awareness was through the use of

nursery rhymes (Adams et al., 1998; Bryant, Bradley, Maclean, & Crossland, 1989; Harrison, 1998; Routman, 2000).

Bryant, Bradley, Maclean, and Crossland (1989) conducted a longitudinal study on 64 students from various backgrounds. They hypothesized that nursery rhymes sensitized children to the phonemes within words. The study included 31 boys and 33 girls with an average age of 3 years and 4 months. These children were observed and evaluated over a 3-year period. This study examined the relationship among four areas: the children's knowledge of nursery rhymes, phonological sensitivity, reading and spelling, and I.Q. and vocabulary. The results demonstrated a strong link between the informal nursery rhyme experience at an early age with the formal educational abilities mastered at the end of the three-year period. The researchers saw this as significant connection children made prior to mastering print.

The importance of developing phonemic awareness in young readers, revisited in Thatcher's (1998) review of the literature, revealed a correlation linking phonemic awareness and decoding skills. These phonemic awareness experiences initially occurred in literate households for approximately 1 hour per day, compiling a total of 1000 hours before entering the schoolhouse (Adams, 1990; Cunningham, 1995). Lyon (1998) described these early literacy

interactions as bedtime and lap-time reading. Without these fundamental phonemic experiences, it was approximated that 25% of first graders from middle-class, and substantially more of those who came from less literacy-rich backgrounds, would fail to gain this necessary skill (Adams et al., 1998). If these interactions failed to produce the desired result due to phonological wiring problems, school personnel must intensify the instruction. This situation occurred with approximately one-sixth of kindergartners and can be remedied, if provided with approximately 20 minutes of daily, direct phonetic awareness instruction (Honig, 1997).

MODELING FOR PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Children internalize phonemic awareness of the English language through instruction and modeling of reading behaviors. The simple act of modeling these desired behaviors taught tremendous skills to the students (Carbo & Cole, 1995; Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, 2000; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Harrison, 1998; Routman, 2000; Wepner, Feeley, & Strickland, 1995). Children from homes where parents model recreational reading, read aloud to them, discussed books they and their children had read, and

recommended good books, increased voluntary reading outside of school (McKool, 1998). Ouellette, Dagostino, and Carifio (1999) supported this finding in their study when they found a relationship between reading aloud and reading comprehension for low ability readers. Carbo and Cole (1995) felt modeling reading for fifteen minutes per day was considered an essential, yet minimal standard for promoting fundamental, quality reading skills within students.

Carbo and Cole (1995) suggested different techniques of modeling, depending on your listeners. When reading to non-readers, choose big books in which you can point to words as you read to demonstrate tracking. It was beneficial to non-fluent readers when a teacher repeated short paragraphs or passages several times while students followed along. This approach helped to increase students' fluency. Another idea was recorded or taped books. This practice provided additional opportunities for students to hear modeling of quality reading, particularly when the teacher was unavailable for individual interaction. Routman (1996) believed in repeatedly reading the same books as beneficial to students.

Cunningham and Allington (1999) discussed additional ways to model reading. They advocated choral reading with poetry or refrains, involving everyone reading together or in alternating groups. They also explored echo

reading in which the teacher read a sentence or portion and the students echoed the teacher. The students tried to mirror his or her inflection and fluency. These two variations of modeling provided students with non-threatening, interactive forms of improving and practicing their reading skills.

The effective method of modeling brought formal language into their world, conveyed meaningful thoughts, and expressed the readers' enjoyment, which beginning readers modified and transferred (Chapman, 1999). To achieve enjoyment, readers must obtain a certain level of success, but this can not happen without practice; unfortunately, research supported television-viewing was increasing, while leisure reading was decreasing (Lehr, 1986).

Lehr (1986) discussed the complex relationship of television-viewing and reading performance. Studies showed television could be a positive addition to children's lives, if utilized in moderation. These studies determined that 10 or fewer hours of television-viewing per week could be a positive influence on reading levels, but any additional time was found to have a negative effect (Lehr, 1986). Lehr (1986) also found that children who watched high quantities of television were less likely to enjoy reading and tended to choose a lower quality of reading material.

Another alarming statistic supporting this decline determined 20% of American students read for pleasure as little as once a year or never (Carbo & Cole, 1995). The International Reading Association (2000) outlined the urgent need to have children reading more because this inherently led to better reading abilities. They proposed offering a wide variety of reading material, which should be easily accessible to students.

HIGH INTEREST LITERATURE TO ACHIEVE LITERACY

Adult modeling through high-quality texts and interactions was fundamental to overcoming these disturbing trends and achieving national literacy. Guszak (1992) believed "reading is not taught but rather that it is principally caught through extensive experiences with books and reading" (p. 32). Guszak (1992) felt daily interactions with literature were paramount and a medley of books at or slightly above the students' reading levels should be made available in every classroom. Adams (1990) determined high interest literature was an essential ingredient in nurturing lifelong readers. Studies revealed this literature needed to be slightly above the reader's present maturity

(Adams et al., 1998; Carbo, 1997). This routine instigated an accelerated rate of progress and student interest.

Parents are also an essential link in catching the "reading bug," so to speak, by providing extensive literature and environmental print such as books, posters, magnetic letters, and writing materials throughout the child's life (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Adams (1990) and Carbo (1997) went further in stating that parents must be interactive and continually engaging children in reading. This can be demonstrated through discussions and questions about books, magazines, and newspapers. Their enjoyment of reading and language was also transferable through play with sounds and words in rhymes, songs, and poems. The International Reading Association (2000) vindicated parental inclusion in their statement that "children have a right to reading instruction that involves parents and communities in their academic lives" (p. 24). This supportive, literature-rich environment within the home facilitated reading growth (Carbo, 1997; Clay, 1976; Routman, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wepner, Feeley, & Strickland, 1995).

OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE READING SKILLS

In addition to literature-intensive situations, students must have opportunities to practice their reading skills. Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (2000) called for "deep and wide opportunities to read." Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama demonstrated a direct correlation between time spent reading at school and reading achievement (Cited in Guszak, 1992). Anderson et al. (1985) concluded that "research suggests that the amount of independent, silent reading that children do in school significantly related to gains in reading achievement" (p. 76).

Pikulski and Cooper's (2000) review of research supported that despite this critical link, students in primary grades spent an average of 7 minutes per school day reading silently, and intermediate grades devoted only 15 minutes. They recommended increasing independent reading time to improve reading levels. Pikulski and Cooper (2000) evaluated several areas of research and indicated that independent reading practice directly influenced a multitude of areas. One area effected by practice was fluency, because without consistent practice, fluency cannot be achieved. Without fluency, readers fail to achieve appropriate levels of comprehension. The second support for increased

independent reading was increased vocabulary. Reading a wide range of books broadened student's vocabulary because of the additional exposure to words and their meanings. The last necessary connection was the building of background knowledge or schema, which was essential to improved reading ability. With increased background knowledge, studies supported a dramatic increase in reading ability (Pikulski & Cooper, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

While the allotment of time for reading within the school day has been reviewed, reading away from school was also cardinal. Anderson et al. (1985) found this to be a meaningful connection that must be exercised to improve reading levels. Cunningham and Allington (1999) found that schools who have successful populations in lower economic areas have a high level of family involvement and commitment. The family played an important role to fostering beneficial reading practice in students. For fifth graders to maintain grade level reading skills, it was found they must read over one million words outside of school assignments, which amounted to 20 minutes of reading 4 nights per week (Honig, 1997). Sadly, Anderson et al. (1985) found more than half of students read for 4 minutes or less per day.

Less successful readers did not develop the recognition and fluency of more accomplished readers, due to a lack of practice (Carbo, 1997; Cunningham,

1995; Routman, 2000). Routman (2000) found rereading literature was a highly instrumental strategy for success in improving reading levels. These experiences are quintessential to maintaining and improving reading skills. This fluency must be attained because without it, comprehension was also lost. One study supported that if sixth graders read less than 100 to 120 words a minute, they would not be able to focus on the text and construct meaning (Honig, 1997).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress highlighted the alarming fact that 40% of fourth graders in America read so slowly they could not understand the material (Honig, 1997). Additional research highlighted the lack of summer reading practice as another factor in widening the reading gap among readers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Most recently, the National Assessment of Educational Progress' 1998 Reading Assessment (1999) reported students had higher average scores if they read more in and out of school than students who read less.

BENEFITS OF DECODING AND OTHER SKILLS

In addition to practice, readers benefited from decoding strategies. Cunningham (1995) and Lyon (1998) emphasized the importance of students

developing a solid knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence to letters and words. Use of direct instruction of phonics sparingly, and disguising drill in the form of games, incorporates a vital component while avoiding boredom (Carbo, 1995). An additional suggestion was to tape record phonics instruction for individual student use, which avoided using valuable instructional time for skills only a few students required.

Poor readers needed several strategies to facilitate their reading. Researchers have determined the best readers do not rely on contextual clues to read text, but have found teaching students to derive meaning from the context of a book was a successful strategy that benefited poor and average readers (Fukkink & de Glopper, 1998; Lyon, 1998; Ponnuru, 1999).

Fukkink and de Glopper's (1998) meta-analysis of twelve studies yielded areas of instruction related to the type of skill or skills for deriving word meaning successfully. Their criteria consisted of studies aimed at the following: using varying contexts to deliberately derive word meaning during reading; the reading skills must have been measured utilizing an adequate posttest; only studies with control groups were used to eliminate extraneous variables; and the study had to contain all necessary information on design and related statistics. After using a random effect model to evaluate the treatments, Fukkink and de Glopper (1998)

determined "a positive effect for instruction in the skill of deriving word meanings from context" (p. 459). The results translated into two-year gains for students within a one-year time period, due to direct instruction.

With direct instruction to develop the use of contextual clues, research findings have emphasized building linguistic and conceptual knowledge through daily comprehension activities (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The words used in children's literature, however, are more rare than words used by adults in daily conversation or on prime-time television. This study also supported that the more extensive a child's vocabulary, the easier it was for him or her to comprehend and retain novel words (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Routman (1996) stated "if children read a million words a year (which is considered an average amount for middle-class children), they will likely gain the meaning of one thousand new words from context" (p. 83).

Another factor was reading achievement increased when companioned with frequent writing and encouragement to use invented or phonetic spelling (Cunningham, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Linguists have changed their view of writing from a simple decoding or scribing process to an understanding that writing helped children develop their thoughts and ideas (Brizuela, 1999). Students needed time to develop their writing skills, especially as they developed

their reading abilities. If a student experienced difficulty with reading, it was likely the difficulty would appear in their writing as well. Consistent and quality experiences with written language promoted all aspects of literacy. The NAEP 1998 Reading Assessment (1999) reported students, who had more frequent written or long answer tests and assignments, had higher scores than students required to write less frequently.

Writing should become a daily aspect of the literacy time within the school day (Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Routman, 1996; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Writing also solidified students' grasp of phonemic awareness by demonstrating an understanding of words and their essential components. Reading or literacy programs needed to be a better compilation of these diverse strategies and techniques to meet the unique needs of today's students (International Reading Association, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For example, Texas' Governor George W. Bush has recognized and accepted this challenge. With his support, the torch was passed along to teachers with specific components targeted as highly beneficial for Texas students' literacy. These components were compiled into the Texas Reading Initiative.

COMPONENTS OF TEXAS READING INITIATIVE

While using diverse techniques, certain elements must be present to implement a quality reading program. A program including phonics, writing, teacher-directed, and self-selected reading instruction was found highly successful (Cunningham, 1995; Scarcelli, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The Texas Reading Initiative program was started by Governor George W. Bush to combat Texas' reading levels. Governor Bush was concerned about the dropping percentages of literate Texans and the increased complexity and demands of today's society. The Texas Education Agency collected and analyzed related research on reading to determine the essential components of a quality reading system.

These elements supported the findings in related literature. The Texas Reading Initiative highlighted twelve components. The central theme was to involve students in activities, which incorporated reading, writing, listening, and speaking into meaningful real-life scenarios. Pinpointing these components and developing a deeper understanding of vital elements of successful reading instruction can be beneficial to administrators, instructors, parents, and students. The Texas Reading Initiative will also help administrators and language arts

instructors at the elementary level to focus their bountiful efforts on research-supported elements and facilitate student achievement in a highly effective manner.

PROCEDURES

Another purpose of this paper was to develop a manual detailing the essentials of successful reading environments for administrators, instructors, parents, and students. The manual was designed to address the Texas Reading Initiative's "Twelve Essential Components of Research-based Programs for Beginning Reading Instruction" put forth by Governor George W. Bush. It also provided useful teaching strategies and ideas to coordinate these components within a literacy environment. This manual can be utilized to improve elementary reading instruction while meeting the goals established in the Texas Reading Initiative. The secondary focus of this manual was fundamental support for administrators and instructors when organizing classroom instruction to encompass the qualities vital to a comprehensive reading program, according to Governor Bush's Texas Reading Initiative.

There were several steps used to develop and produce the manual. Initially, the manual focused on the "Twelve Essential Components of Research-based Programs for Beginning Reading Instruction" proposed in the Texas Reading Initiative. The manual furnished a brief description of each of the twelve components and the essential factors related to that component. Following the brief description, beneficial instructional strategies and techniques were elaborated upon to incorporate these components successfully into individual classroom instruction.

In producing the manual, a review of the current literature of relevant items found in books, professional journals, ERIC documents, and dissertation abstracts was included. This review encompassed classic studies, but primarily focused on literature authored within the past 10 years. This literature review provided support for the twelve Texas Reading Initiative components and the strategies suggested in the manual.

Informal interviews were conducted with 2 administrators and 2 teachers in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District. The objective of these interviews was to explore characteristics and techniques practiced in quality reading instruction within actual classrooms. The administrators shared their unique leadership approaches to facilitating quality teaching. The teachers were

asked to explicate about some of the most effective techniques that they used within their classrooms. These discussions were incorporated into the activities and instructional techniques provided for each component in the manual (See Appendices).

CONCLUSIONS

The ability to read, write, and communicate effectively is paramount to productivity in American society. With the ongoing expansions in the technology field, the workplace requires a more complex, skilled worker who can read and comprehend at an advanced level of literacy. School personnel across all grade levels must meet this challenge and prepare the students of today for the demands of tomorrow's world.

When school administrators and teachers look critically and closely at these societal demands, they need to devise a clear and concise plan of implementation for this new preparation and lifelong learning. This plan of action must first include and evaluate the research on reading and language acquisition to determine the most effective methods of instruction. Once the

current research has been reviewed, the main components of the plan will become much clearer.

Current research shows that students are not mastering reading and written language at an acceptable rate. Research also shows that children are not reading enough to close this gap. In addition to the lack of quality reading, they are spending more time watching television. With this gloomy forecast of continuous, negative outcomes, a plan of attack for effective teaching must be put into place to insure that students conquer not only the mystery of reading, but also become fluent.

The initial step in this positive direction involves the learning and mastering of phonemic awareness with young children. After they have conquered this aspect of language, teachers must structure their classrooms to incorporate a variety of reading, writing, and communication activities which complement and build skills and developments. There are many important attributes in a literacy classrooms, but ideally, administrators, educators, parents, and people in communities wish to see children involved in print and building on skills and experiences within and outside of their classrooms. These experiences contribute to their background knowledge, which builds their vocabulary and language mastery.

These various components work together to form literacy classrooms that open the minds of young learners to the adventure of learning and the joy of reading. By incorporating these aspects into a lesson cycle, teachers can create substantial lessons. To instill a love of learning, teachers must bring their love of the reading into classrooms and into each lesson.

These endeavors will inspire children to learn and grow into productive citizens who are equipped to handle the demands of the workplace. With these quality experiences, children of today and tomorrow will mature and become integral members of society with attributes that support and strengthen every aspect of civilization.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Teacher and Administrative Conversations
at Wilshire Elementary
in Hurst-Euless-Bedford I.S.D.

For additional information, the first author of this paper interviewed 2 elementary administrators and 2 elementary teachers, focusing on their thoughts concerning language arts or reading programs. Each person was interviewed individually to ascertain his or her personal views. These interviews were beneficial to the manual since they provided real world attitudes and opinions as well as depicting how different aspects of the Texas Reading Initiative were being incorporated within one elementary school.

Interview With a Principal of Wilshire Elementary School

What do you look for in a language arts or reading teacher?

I feel the most important quality for any teacher is the passion for the subject matter. Teachers must demonstrate this love for reading or language arts to their students because children sense genuine emotion and interest. They respond to a teacher's feelings and attitudes. When a teacher has a love for the subject, he or she conveys this devotion throughout the lesson and interactions with students. An intelligent person is good, but if he or she lacks a passion, he or she will be less effective with the student body.

When you walk into a language arts or reading classroom, what do you expect to see?

I feel it is important to see a good blend of skills and concepts. I believe that too much of any approach is detrimental. Overuse of skill sheets can kill enthusiasm. However, a detailed, systematic approach is highly important to the success of the program. I expect to see good modeling of various skills taking place within a quality reading environment. Students receive many benefits from

modeling of reading and reading skills. I also expect teachers to make an effort to connect with parents and work together to help the student.

Have you seen any particular practices within language arts or reading that were especially effective or ineffective?

I think the program must be highly structured with a phonetic base. The staff should use similar visuals with children. These visuals should remain consistent from classroom to classroom and school to school. The entire staff should also use a similar vernacular when discussing different aspects. There should be a high quality training component for the entire district including administration. The district should make a significant investment in libraries.

What do you see in the future for language arts or reading?

I hope to see a kindergarten through third grade approach with specific, language arts instructor-training that is developed within the district and implemented consistently across the district. This training will be ongoing with the flexibility to adjust and adapt to district, teacher, or student needs. The district will provide needed materials for the classroom.

Interview With an IRA (Vice-Principal) of Wilshire Elementary School

What do you look for in a language arts or reading teacher?

I look for an enjoyment in the subject and a true desire to teach that specific area. I feel a balanced background is important when looking for a reading or language arts teacher. It is also important that the teacher be familiar with the materials. It is an added bonus when you are able to find someone with additional credentials or credits pertaining to his or her teaching field.

When you walk into a language arts or reading classroom, what do you expect to see?

I expect to see a variety of activities going on throughout the room and within the language arts block. Some examples are silent reading, choral reading, paired reading, a skill lesson, a word wall, and writing activities. I would expect there to be a combination of small and large group lessons. The teacher would be facilitating groups throughout the room. He or she would be able to work effectively with small and large groups while monitoring the classroom.

Have you seen any particular practices within language arts or reading that were especially effective or ineffective?

I have seen different variations of phonics or skill instruction used in an effective manner. Stevenson was a good program used in the special education arena, but it did not blend well with the general classrooms and their curriculum. Sadly, some general education programs rely exclusively on the use of the basal as their program. The basal is a good element of a reading program, but it should not be the entire reading program. Another program, which was highly beneficial to its students, is Reading Recovery. The drawback to this program is the cost and the need for individual instruction.

What do you see in the future for language arts or reading?

I think in the future, administrators and teachers will continue to see a movement toward a more balanced approach to reading instruction. There will not be a dramatic swing toward either approach, but a melding of the best of all ideas. I think there will be an emphasis on reading informational books, nonfiction work, technical materials, and Internet information. I also see a shift

toward further integration of subject matter, which will elevate all subjects and increase student achievement.

An Interview With a Wilshire Elementary Teacher With Pre-Kindergarten Through Sixth Grade Experience

What is your philosophy or core belief about language arts or reading?

I feel many things work together to create a solid reading program. The program needs to incorporate phonics instruction, work on site-words, a basal reader, and trade books. I also feel build-up readers are essential to a program because they provide children, who might be struggling, with a way to experience success. From this success, they build confidence and a joy for reading. I do feel drilling over dolch words is helpful and, if presented correctly, can be fun for students. I trend to concentrate on phonics with lower readers to build a foundation and I see a lot of carry over to their spelling and writing ability. I try to create lessons, which involve all the senses, to help the many different types of learners in the classroom. Finally, I spend a lot of time modeling reading and conveying my love of reading to the students because they love to be read to and they realize how I much I enjoy it.

What things do you feel are essential to a quality reading program?

My philosophy or core beliefs mirror my feeling about what should be utilized in a reading program. I would add that I think good, interesting stories are very important to a quality program because children will strive to read a book above their reading level, if it is of interest to them. I also support repetition in reading. I encourage the students to reread a book they enjoyed because this is highly beneficial to them. I do feel skills must be taught in a systematic manner to insure all children have the ability to attack novel words.

Where do you see children struggling or having difficulty and how do you help them?

One of the main areas is word attack. They do not have the understanding or skill needed to decipher words. This prompts me to focus on skills they are lacking and develop strategies they can use. I also see many children who struggle with spelling within their own writing. They are not able to transfer words from a spelling list to everyday writing. I try to use spelling as a place to reinforce phonetic patterns and high frequency words. Another area of

concern is students' lack of comprehension. They are working so diligently to decode words that they fail to understand or pay attention to what is happening in the story. This is a place where the strategy of rereading a selection is beneficial to children. I think the most important thing to remember is modeling of high interest books motivates children.

An Interview With a Wilshire Elementary Teacher With Kindergarten Through Sixth Grade Experience

What is your philosophy or core belief about language arts or reading?

My core belief is that children must be taught to practice and continue to practice skills that they find most difficult. For my students who struggle with reading, I discuss how important this will be to their futures and, despite it being difficult for them, they must continue to practice, because without practice, they will not improve and they will continue to struggle. I try to convey the joy and sense of accomplishment they will find in overcoming this trial and conquering this hurdle.

What things do you feel are essential to a quality reading program?

The main aspect of a quality reading program is to incorporate a tremendous amount of reading. This is essential to the success of any language arts approach. You can not improve and grow without practice. In addition to high volume reading, the students must be questioned and converse over their reading. This enables them to develop their communication skills and develop their critical thinking ability. It is important to have students reread material before these discussions to ensure their full comprehension of the material. Another alternative to oral communication is written communication. Requiring children to write and explore concepts is indispensable to improving their grasp of topics. This also integrates reading and writing and forces students to establish a connection between their reading and writing ability. Writing also springboards into grammar and spelling practice. It furnishes a valuable bridge to these skills and offers a chance to employ their grammar and spelling skills. By having students proof their work or a fellow student's, they see the connection and internalize some of the skills they have been taught. Another aspect of a comprehensive program is the addition of phonetic training wherever it is needed. This can be done in a large or small group, or individually. I think it

is important to teach phonics, but it is equally important to teach alternative strategies such as context clues. I also teach students how to attack reading passages or stories. Finally, the best method of motivation for students is the use of high interest books. When a student is curious about a topic or book, they are motivated to read anything on that subject. This provides an ideal way of introducing books on a higher reading level.

Where do you see children struggling or having difficulty and how do you help them?

One strategy I find most beneficial with students who struggle with comprehension is to reread the passage or story. This gives them an additional opportunity to interpret the material fully. When working on writing skills and sentence structure, an effective strategy is to work in context. If they work on a paragraph or story, this connects the writing to a meaningful and real world application. Since vocabulary is an important factor in reading ability, I have daily activities which students do to broaden their vocabulary.

APPENDIX B
Administrative, Instructor, Parent and Student Manual
For Effective Implementation of the
Texas Reading Initiative

This manual was created to facilitate the utilization of the Texas Reading Initiative components in addressing the essential areas of a language arts or reading program. The manual has been divided into the twelve components set forth by the Texas Reading Initiative. When compiling ideas and techniques, the first author looked at Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success by Burns, Griffin, and Snow. Ideas from Patricia Cunningham's Phonics They Use: Words for Reading and Writing were also used. Finally, the first author incorporated many of the themes from my interviews with colleagues.

COMPONENT ONE
Children Have Opportunities to Expand Their Use and Appreciation of Oral Language

REASONING:

The classroom must be an environment in which the students feel safe to express their thoughts and ideas without fear. In this situation, all students are given an abundance of opportunities to read, hear, discuss, and share thoughts about a variety of subjects. Students need to be immersed in language to facilitate their growth as competent readers, writers, and communicators.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Use newspapers, magazines, and the Internet to discuss current national and world events appropriate to the students' ages.
- Discuss literature read throughout the day, especially new or unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts.
- Sing songs, rhymes, and chants to explore the use of language, especially the different phonemes used in the English language.
- Use games or activities that involve talking and listening to aid their communication skills.
- Introduce and examine pictures or items, then discuss and describe them as a group.
- Research and share information about your culture or countries.
- Model your thinking process when you write.
- Have students work in cooperative pairs or groups to facilitate communication.

COMPONENT TWO
Children Have Opportunities to Expand Their Use and Appreciation of Printed Language

REASONING:

The teachers in classrooms must present a situation so that each learner has a multitude of chances to engage with print. It is vital students interact with print as often as possible to increase their understanding of the printed word. It is equally important that learners develop this appreciation for the language to motivate them to be lifelong learners.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Introduce new and entertaining books, magazines, and poems to captivate their imaginations.
- When introducing this printed material, discuss how one reads a book, include how to hold the book correctly, how to turn pages, and what direction to read the words.
- When introducing this printed material, track along so children with less experience understand the correspondence between the printed and spoken word.
- Have items labeled throughout the classroom and school to increase students' awareness of the printed language.
- Surf previewed sites on the Internet to demonstrate the variety of ways people communicate.
- Tour the library and explore the many different genres of writing and their uses.
- Introduce a topic, such as an animal or country, and provide additional books and materials pertaining to that topic.

COMPONENT THREE
Children Have Opportunities to Hear Good Stories and Informational Books Read Aloud Daily

REASONING:

The classroom must provide countless circumstances to interact with books, and this can only happen if reading is a daily occurrence. It must not only be a daily happening, also it must be a quality experience in which students see and hear exemplary modeling from an adult. This modeling solidifies what reading looks and sounds like in the students' minds.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Teachers could preview new books with students to pique their curiosity about novel subject matter and story lines.
- Teachers could read fiction, nonfiction, and content text to the students to increase their exposure to multiple genres.
- Teachers could also model different ways to determine an unknown word within the text such as word attract skills, context clues, and pictorial clues.
- Have a discussion about particular phases or words used in a book to be helpful with diverse learners.
- Have a discussion about concepts and ideas introduced by books to enrich a reader's knowledge base and vocabulary.
- Teachers could read and discuss comics from the newspaper to widen students' options of reading material.
- Teachers could read and discuss an article from the newspaper or Internet to increase oral communication and contribute to children's knowledge of the world.

COMPONENT FOUR
Children Have Opportunities to Understand and Manipulate the Building Blocks of Spoken Language

REASONING:

The classroom is a vital arena for early literacy acquisition because phonological awareness is considered one of the principal indicators for future reading success. The ability to comprehend and use the different phonemes within the English language is essential to a positive outcome as a reader. Having meaningful interactions with parts of the language is paramount to a student's future reading achievements.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Sing rhymes or songs and talk about the different words or phrases used throughout the song to develop a sense of words, rhymes, and phrasing.
- Play games like 'I Spy' with children to support children's ability to distinguish sounds within words. For example, have students use words that only begin with a certain sound.
- Have children come up with rhyming words to enhance a skill lesson and develop children's listening and speaking.
- Have children identify all the words they can that start with a certain letter to reinforce the sound made by that letter.
- Group children in pairs or small groups to work together to create lists of rhyming or associated words, then have them trade with another pair and determine the mystery pattern.
- Talk to children and have them verbalize as much as possible to increase their oral language skills.
- Have students bring and share about things from their home to refine their communication expertise.

COMPONENT FIVE
Children Have Opportunities to Learn About and Manipulate the Building Blocks of Written Language

REASONING:

The teacher must arrange for time to be spent reading and exploring language, which must be coupled with the chance to work with the written language. If children only read or only write, they will not become literate individuals. They must obtain both skills. Writing must take place throughout the learners' day with real-world applications. Having students express their thoughts and ideas in written form allows the individual to communicate their exact feelings and ideas in a meaningful manner.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Teachers need to incorporate daily writing into their routine so students are constantly learning and improving their ability.
- Have children practice the letter names until they can recognize them quickly and accurately. This has been shown to help children become strong readers.
- Have students journal each morning or afternoon about a specific topic or something of interest to them. If possible, respond to their writing. This is a nonthreatening way to practice writing skills and an opportunity to build dialogue.
- Encourage children to attempt to spell words that are not familiar to them to work on internalizing their grasp of phonics and word patterns.
- Have students write responses to readings to improve their written communication.
- Have students write for real-world purposes such as a note to parents about upcoming events or about a good thing they did while at school.

COMPONENT SIX

Children Have Opportunities to Learn the Relationship Between the Sounds of Spoken Language and the Letters of Written Language

REASONING:

It is only with an abundance of experiences that a student comes to understand the complex relationship between the spoken and written word. The classroom teachers must present these experiences to solidify the alphabetic principle, which is a cornerstone of reading acquisition. The alphabetic principle refers to written words being made up of patterns of letters that represent the sounds of spoken words. Once learners grasp this understanding, they are able to begin their exploration of the world of print.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Start by familiarizing students with the first phoneme in a word (often referred to as the 'onset') and the remainder of the word or the part that rhymes (often referred to as the 'rime') to heighten their awareness of relationships.
- Pair children to find words that start with specific letters or sounds in any type of printed material to reinforce this connection.
- Identify items within the class, which have a specific letter or sound in them to enhance their understanding of the connection between the spoken and written word.
- Post class-created lists around the room that show certain onsets or rimes. Have students add to these lists as they find additional words.
- Have children bring something from home that has the letter or sound they are working on that week to share with the class and extend their awareness.
- Have students create a personal dictionary to put new words or words they might have misspelled at a previous time. This builds independence and ownership.

COMPONENT SEVEN
Children Have Opportunities to Learn Decoding Strategies

REASONING:

Today's classroom must incorporate the teaching of decoding strategies to ensure all children have the tools needed to conquer print. By teaching these decoding strategies, teachers give students the tool used most frequently by successful reader. This instruction should be coupled with authentic text and game or activities, while avoiding the "drill and kill" from previous eras.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Set aside a short block of time each day to introduce, review, or elaborate on specific phonemes and graphemes to ensure students grasp how words are created.
- Teach children how to break down words into smaller segments so they will be able to use this as a strategy with new words
- Teach students how to finger spell shorter words by having each sound represented by the next finger. They put all the fingers together when they are saying the word. This helps visual and kinesthetic learners.
- Have children trace letters or words in sand or on sandpaper to help kinesthetic learners to solidify this new knowledge.
- Have children create flipbooks that demonstrate how changing one letter alters the entire word and its meaning. This is a wonderful technique for visual learners.
- Teach children suffixes and prefixes and their meanings. This will help them decode and comprehend novel words within their independent reading.

COMPONENT EIGHT
Children Have Opportunities to Write and Relate Their Writing to Spelling and Reading

REASONING:

The classroom must involve authentic experiences with reading, writing, and spelling. These are not to be isolated tasks that lack meaning or purpose. Students need to see and understand the necessity of the tasks. Being given time to explore the written language, and experience the relationship between these aspects, is essential to developing a joy for learning.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Have students write about stories they have read or have been read to them. This gives them an opportunity to communicate their thoughts and ideas.
- Have students create stories or variations of stories they know to allow them to be creative and enjoy the writing process.
- Encourage students to use their spelling words in their writing to internalize these words into their growing repertoire. They might try to make a fun story using some or all of their spelling words.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to create books and learn from one another.
- Have students proof or switch papers to proof their writing to build awareness of misspelled words or incorrect grammar.
- Set up pen pals through mail or online, which demonstrates a real world application and a novel way of communicating and learning.

COMPONENT NINE
Children Have Opportunities to Practice Accurate and Fluent Reading in Decodable Stories

REASONING:

The experience of being a successful reader is an important stepping stone to developing a love of reading. Learners must practice on decodable text, which they can read and reread until they feel comfortable, to ensure they internalize the various phonemes and graphemes. This type of interaction with books builds confidence and desire to achieve and creates fluency.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Have a wide variety of books from the simplest picture book to chapter books available for children to use. Arrange these books into a system that the students can handle to locate books they are comfortable reading.
- Encourage students to reread books they have read and feel comfortable reading to increase their fluency and comprehension.
- Have students read to one another and discuss the book's themes and ideas.
- Have a system to ensure you listen to each child read on a regular basis. This allows you to track their progress and pinpoint areas of strength and weakness.
- Find another class to pair up with and read to one another. Children enjoy interacting with other children and learn from them. This also promotes rereading of books to prepare to read to others.
- Have children read into a tape recorder. This will provide them with immediate feedback on their reading strengths and weaknesses.

COMPONENT TEN
Children Have Opportunities to Read and Comprehend a Wide Assortment of Books and Other Texts

REASONING:

Having a wide variety of books, magazines, poems and other texts is essential in any classroom. Children need to have access to these materials and be encouraged to browse, read, and share them. Children must be provided the time to read and explore them by themselves, with friends, and with the instructor. This gives the student an opportunity to develop a deeper appreciation.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Have a wide variety of books from the simplest picture book to chapter books available for children to use. Arrange these books into a system that the students can utilize to locate books they are comfortable reading.
- Read books from different levels and genres, then make them available to students. By introducing various topics and ideas, children's broaden their background knowledge.
- Find appropriate Internet sites for students to explore and enjoy. This involves students to reading through a new and exciting medium.
- By bringing magazines and newspapers for students to choose from and enjoy, children find reading comes in many forms other than books.
- Have students keep a list of reading they have done and what type of genre to create a sense of accomplishment.
- Give students an opportunity to share a favorite book they have read with other classmates.

COMPONENT ELEVEN
Children Have Opportunities to Develop and Comprehend New Vocabulary Through Wide Reading and Direct Vocabulary Instruction

REASONING:

The classroom must be an environment in which the student has the time to learn new vocabulary through indirect and direct teaching. With students reading a high quantity and quality of texts, they will be exposed to and acquire new vocabulary, but they also need specific instruction in vocabulary to ensure this vital acquisition. Another factor in the acquisition of vocabulary is the simple ingredient of practice, because students only learn new words when exposed to them.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Introduce a new vocabulary word each week and have activities related to that word throughout the week such as looking it up in the dictionary, illustrating it, acting it out, and using it in a sentence.
- Have students find synonyms and antonyms for commonly used words to increase their vocabulary.
- Have students put new or unfamiliar words in their personal dictionary to define later.
- Have a contest to see who can find a way to use a vocabulary word to their conversation throughout the day or week.
- Have students use the word of the week in a sentence, then vote on the class favorite. This gives students to be creative and utilize their growing vocabulary.
- Challenge students look through the dictionary to find new words they can use in their writing.

COMPONENT TWELVE
Children Have Opportunities to Learn and Apply Comprehension Strategies as They Reflect Upon and Think Critically About What They Read

REASONING:

The instructor must provide time to work on higher level thinking constructs. Students must be expected to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information they have read or learned. These skills force the learner to think and work at a higher, critical level which will be crucial to life in the real-world workplace.

IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Have students write critiques of books or other texts they have read to increase and deepen their understanding of the book's theme.
- Have students create a book, magazine, or newsletter. This provides students with a creative outlet and interesting way to reflect on events, books, or problems.
- Have students write a letter or note to their parents about their week and their undertakings to build communication between home and school as well as students and parents.
- Have individuals research and write a report about something of interest to them. After completing their report, have them share highlights with the class.
- Have children compare and contrast books or stories. This assignment forces students to analyze and synthesize information and present it in a new manner.